



Fire Safe San Mateo County

February 10, 2021
General Meeting Minutes

Online conference call. No in-person meeting

Commence 9:35 AM

Attendance:

Online Zoom conference call in lieu of in-person meeting due to COVID-19 meeting restriction due to sheltering-in-place order.

62 members attended the meeting.

I. Introduction

Council President Denise Enea welcomed all members who called into the meeting. Introduced first presenter, Devan Leblanc from Ember Defense LLC

II. Defense for Homes in the line of fire - Devan Leblanc – Ember Defense LLC

- Headquartered out of Reno, Nevada
- Specializing in home hardening, currently working on projects in Marin County, however, 20% of work is in San Mateo county, specifically in Portola Valley.
- Home Hardening
 - o Effort put into forest management side of wildfire resiliency, but not a lot of effort put into home hardening.
- UC cooperative extension priority list
 - o #1 roof and roof edge – attic and crawlspace vents – defensible space
 - Roof materials
 - Metal, tile, asphalt, class A
 - Regular maintenance and cleaning of debris accumulation in valleys and vertical surface interfaces
 - Gutters
 - Dry debris buildup
 - Flashing vs exposed wood edge
 - Metal vs vinyl
 - solution – gutter guards
 - o all metal gutter guard
 - o no foam or plastics – sold in WUI area

- Attic and crawlspace vents
 - Vulnerability of vents to wind blown embers
 - Ridge vents – off ridge roof vents – gables – under eave – foundation
 - Difficult to implement home hardening on retrofit projects, much easier on newer constructions
 - Ember and fireproof vents
 - <1/8” mesh screen minimum
 - Average cost - \$5-8k
 - Defensible Space
 - Most homeowners are up to speed on defensible space
 - #2 Decks – enclosed or clear of debris
 - Enclose or screen off deck
 - Flashing between wall and first board
 - Foil faced bitumen tape – using a foil faced self-adhering bitumen flashing tape reduces flame spread by removing the joist as a fuel source for both parallel and perpendicular deck board installations.
 - #3 windows – dual pain tempered glass 4x less likely to blow out than single pane
 - #4 eaves – enclose eaves and retrofit vents
 - #5 siding – Class A, first 6” from ground are critical to remove flammable material
 - Class A rated siding, fill gaps and holes
 - >6” spacing between siding and ground
 - 0-5’ hardscaping recommended
 - Coatings and gels
- Begins with a homeowner consultation on the property with recommendations and reasonings.
- Results
 - During the 2018 “Camp Fire” in Paradise, more than 12,000 homes burned. Of the homes built since 2008 to California’s “Chapter 7a” building standard, 51% survived.
 - Only 18% of the homes built before 2008 survived.
- Do not currently have a vegetation management side of the business.
- **Questions:**
 - Is there any type of fire repellent for wooden decks?
 - There are some coatings, but they need to be applied prior to stain, paint, etc. It has to be applied to bare wood.
 - Longevity of the coating is dependent on rain, sunlight, time, etc. Usually only rated for 4-5 years.
 - Is it helpful to paint with a clay-based paint, if you can’t afford new siding?

- I do not currently have an answer. As far as caulking cracks, the cracks only become an issue when there is vegetation adjacent to the siding. Some painters will seal off cracks >1/8" before they come in and paint.
 - Gels – there is a product called Barricade, but we typically do not advise. They need to be applied before the fire and only last about 6-8 hours. We prefer to see homeowners evacuate, rather than stay behind and apply the gel. Phoscheck is another option, but there may be environmental implications in regards to fisheries. AIG the insurance agency has crews that will come and spray Phoscheck around your property prior to a fire.
- Can you remove a few feet of siding at the bottom of the house, replace it with a non-flammable material, but retain the wood siding for the upper portion of the house?
 - Sounds like a good solution, especially if you'd like to keep some of your landscape vegetation. With the mindset that bushes will burn up to 3x their height.
 - Ember does not provide this type of project, but any contractor should be able to do this type of work.
- What insurance companies does Ember work with?
 - Chubb, Pure, AIG
- Per Steve Quarrels (expert), intumescent coatings are the least expensive way to reduce ignitions but they do not weather well, so in a small amount of time they lose their efficacy. Not a viable option today. Results of fire testing after weathering are poor.
- Did your insurers provide any guidance in product selection or recommendations?
 - No, we went with building code approved products.
- What's the latest recommendation on installing exterior sprinklers on the roof or tops of walls?
 - There are low cost sprinklers. If you are pulling water from the main water supply, you may be taking water from firefighters that need it. The purpose of those sprinklers is to saturate fine fuels that act as ignitable material.
- What is the priority order for implementing retrofit projects?
 - Site by site considerations are important, there is no one size fits all list.

- On the topic of home inspections
 - Fire Safe Sonoma used a grant to hire an individual to go house by house and evaluate for fire resistance.
 - Fire Safe San Mateo should look into grant funding for a similar project.
- Do you have a resource to make recommendations on ventilation needs?
 - Roofing companies that install attic fans may be able to provide that service. In addition, architects can make that recommendation.
- Resources
 - Devan LeBlanc – dleblanc@emberdefenseLLC.com
 - Sales – Adam Iveson – Aiveson@emberdefensellc.com
 - www.EmberDefenseLLC.com
 - 415-573-2400

III. Summary Update: Project Specific Analysis (PSA) developed for SMC Huddart & Wunderlich Parks utilizing the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) - Shelby Kranich- Assistant Forester II – Auten Resource Consulting (ARC)

- Cal VTP – Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)
 - Any Project specific analysis (PSA) that is developed underneath the EIR does not receive public comment
 - The PSA proposes subsequent activities under the PEIR and all the scope and findings must fit within the PEIR – created in order to streamline the environmental compliance portion of certain fuel reduction projects.
 - The PEIR outlines best management practices and mitigations for projects
 - Once a PSA is approved, the document is viable for 10 years.
- Project areas in Huddart and Wunderlich County Parks – as part of a forest health grant provided through CalFire to San Mateo RCD and partnering agencies (San Mateo County Parks, California State Parks, and Girl Scouts of North America)
 - Overall project is to create a forest health and fuel reduction project to reduce ladder fuels, remove flammable vegetation, mitigate invasive species, and create a fuel break.
 - Predominantly mechanical treatment activities over 402 acres
 - Huddart – 217 acres
 - Wunderlich – 184.5 acres of treatment area
 - Herbicide may be used within the project, around roads, trails, and pockets of invasive species.
- Project specific details

- First steps are to look at the Board of Forestry Website's implementation page (<https://bof.fire.ca.gov/projects-and-programs/calvtp/>)
- The project must fall within "treatable landscapes"
 - We then run a slope analysis in ArcGIS to delineate ground that is less than 35-40% slope (common threshold for machine-operable slopes)
 - Then all created polygons are ground verified for vegetation type presence, access of heavy equipment, and sensitive resource.
 - Mitigation measures are put in place to avoid sensitive resources.
- The PSA ensures that the project is within the scope of the PEIR and that all mitigation measures are implemented.
- We also maintain communication with relevant agencies such as CDFW, CDF, etc.
- Currently, all field layout and flagging of sensitive resources has been implemented and the county of san Mateo is currently reviewing the final draft of the PSA
- Next steps:
 - Submit a georeferenced point to the board of forestry/ Calfire so that the project shows up on the Board of Forestry's map of all proposed projects under the CalVTP
 - Within 15 days, we can submit the notice of determination as well as final documents. Once those are submitted we will submit a georeferenced polygon of the proposed project location, which will be posted online.
- Constraints
 - Operations can only occur on existing infrastructure
 - Can't create any new roads or watercourse crossings
 - Can only operate within treatable landscapes.
- Questions
 - What are the main vegetation types in the treatment areas?
 - Redwood/ Douglas fir, with some sensitive resources such as oak woodland, which require different mitigation measures or retention requirements.
 - Chaparral and coastal scrub are other sensitive vegetation communities, which require additional mitigation measures or restrictions.
 - How is a treatable landscape defined?
 - May be a better question for CalFire
 - Do you find the program useful?
 - It's extremely beneficial, however, the PSAs are very in depth for each resource. There are considerations for biological, archaeological, and geological resources.

- Who typically reviews the document?
 - The project proponent reviews the document. So the decision making body of the project makes the reviews.
- Is there an analog for the LRA?
 - Unknown
- Is invasive species control included in the PSA?
 - The PSA is largely broad, but there are recommendations made for invasive species.
- Are burn piles included in your prescription?
 - No, not for this PSA. Only mechanical treatments and herbicide have been applied.
- Will a maintenance plan be written for the project?
 - The maintenance prescription is written into the PSA, with recommendations for maintenance every 2-3 years or based on a rotational basis.
- How did the review process for the PSA compare to a THP or standard CEQA analysis?
 - I (Shelby) have not produced a THP at this point in my career, so I can't make the comparison. However, it doesn't have the public review period and is an expedited process. The PSA must fit within the PEIR and conform to those requirements. THPs are more in depth and specify where operations can occur.
- From Sarah Collamer (CalFire)
 - Because of the size of the project, the PSA/ CalVTP makes sense, however, for smaller projects a categorical exemption may be more appropriate.
- Is getting approved for burn piles or prescribed burns a possibility for future projects?
 - Yes, there are specific standard project requirements and mitigation measures for those types of projects.
- Resources:
 - California Vegetation Program homepage on the Board of Forestry Website: <https://bof.fire.ca.gov/projects-and-programs/calvtp/>
 - Links to the treatable landscape viewer, proposed projects, and approved projects are at the bottom of the linked page.
 - Auten Resource Consulting website: <https://www.autenresourceconsulting.com/>

IV. Update: January San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services (OES) meeting update - Casey Dunn

- There are still trees coming down in Butano Canyon and other burned areas. A tree came down in Butano Canyon on Superbowl Sunday and hit a powerline
- Sheena: has Cal OES come into the canyon at all?
 - o I (Casey) do not believe so. There may be a risk to losing your insurance if you make claims.

V. Announcements and Discussion – For the good of the group – All membership

- Rich Sampson – most of the Cal Recycle activity has been in Barranca Knolls, White House Canyon, and in Santa Cruz County.
 - o Foresters and other companies are looking into how the removed woody material can be utilized. Cogen, biochar, milling, etc. But all these techniques cost money.
- Sheena – are any folks applying for the OOS grant for wildfire preparedness and underserved communities – Due Feb 22
 - o No one in the group spoke up.
 - o Grant information found here: <https://www.smcsustainability.org/climate-ready>
- Sarah Collamer- We are doing fuel reduction in San Mateo county, it was funded at the unit and county level. Small scale burn projects on Cahill ridge and Teague hill, as well as on San Bruno mountain.
- Craig Beckman – is skyline boulevard a priority fuel management project?
 - o There is preliminary work being done. Gail and Debra invited San Mateo county fire safe, Woodside fire, Caltrans, and everyone agrees that it is a good project. Because it's a large-scale project it will likely come into the purview of Fire Safe San Mateo.
 - o The scope is the right of way from Grizzly Flat to Highway 92 in the north.

- Debra Born – we learned from Santa Clara fire safe council that they will be clearing at the south end, where San Mateo and Santa Clara county overlap. But it will not be considered a shaded fuel break, it will be viewed as more of an escape route.
- Don Bullard - During the time that highway 84 is closed for Caltrans eucalyptus removal, CalFire and Woodside fire will continue to remove fuel on the right of way of both sides of highway 84. They will try to get as much done with the time they are allotted during the Caltrans closures.
- Denise Ennea - New FSSMC online io group was created to post news, updates, topics for discussion, etc.
 - o Link can be found here: <https://groups.io/g/FSSMC>

VI. Adjourn

- Meeting adjourned at 11:31 A.M.
- Meetings the second Wednesday of every month
- **Next Meeting: March 10, 2021**